*Introduction*

We return this morning to our series theme of Spiritual Darkness, following our two week gap in order to accommodate the HBC finale and welcome Morgan in to the pulpit, and I am grateful to Morgan and Rachel for doing that.

We have looked over the past two sessions at Strongholds - what they are and how we build them in our lives and how Paul the Apostle had learnt that there were visible and invisible forces at work in our lives.

We also have looked at the fact that as Christians we are in a war against spiritual forces. Last time we saw who our enemy was and what was happening in the heavenlies.

As Christians we must be aware of what is going on around us, both in the physical and the spiritual, because we have an enemy, the enemy is Satan and his hordes of demons who seek to destroy those who trust in Jesus as their Saviour.

***1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.***

Notice I said - those who trust in Jesus as their Saviour and not those who would call themselves religious, or a religious system. He is not interested in religion, for that has missed the mark, He is only interested in those who profess the name of Christ.

For those who are religious or just do not want to know about Christ the following is true:

***2 Cor 4:3-5 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.***

The one thing above all others that the devil likes to use against us, to put us down and to stop us from living victorious lives in Christ is that of guilt.

He is so determined to stop us that he loves getting us so busy, that we do not have time to read the scriptures, to pray and do the things we need as Christians to do. That then leads us to feeling guilty.

This in turn leads to us failing as Christians and being defeated.

But the Bible tells us that we are not a defeated people but we already have the victory and that the devil is a defeated foe.

***Col 2: 13-15When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. 15And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.***

Satan does NOT want you to grasp this fact, he wants to make sure that Christians do not understand this because it is the key to his defeat and your victory.

If we turn to the book of Revelation 12:10

***10Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah.  
For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.***

Who is this 'accuser of our brothers and sisters'? It is Satan.

Satan has access to the presence of God, we know this from the book of Job

***Job 1:6-7One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.”***

Why does Satan accuse us? what is his objective?

It is simply this, he wants us to feel guilty. As long as we feel guilty, we cannot defeat him.

Guilt is the key to our defeat, righteousness is the key to his defeat - our victory.

Satan will throw guilt at us every day so it is important to know and understand what God has done for us.

Often, when a person comes to faith in Christ, they have done it through a simple prayer, and there is nothing wrong with that at all, but because of that, they do not really know what God has done for them, for it goes well beyond just forgiveness of sins.

We need to understand the following:

1. God through the cross, has dealt with the problem of guilt, both in the past and in the future. He has made complete provision for both.

How has God dealt with the past?

***Col 2:13 He forgave us all our sins***

Through the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf, as our representative, carrying our guilt and paying the penalty, God is able to forgive us for ALL our sinful acts.

Because His justice has been satisfied by the death of Christ.

He can forgive us every sin that we have ever committed without compromising His own justice.

So the first thing we need to know and understand is that all our past sins, no matter how serious, have been forgiven when we trust in Christ as Saviour through faith.

2. God has made provision for the future.

***Col 2:14having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.***

The Charge of our legal indebtedness or the written law - the Law of Moses, the requirement to keep the law for righteousness has now been taken away

He has nailed it to the cross of Jesus.

Do you truly understand what this means, what God has done for you?

God has not said your past is forgiven, now try again, but this time keep the commandments. No. Not only has He forgiven your past sins but he has also taken away the written law that would condemn us every day, and He has said that you and I, if we have faith in Jesus Christ, His One and only Son, are righteous through Him.

There are a couple of related passages that help us with this: firstly

***Romans 10:4 Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.***

The New Life version puts it slightly differently

***4 For Christ has put an end to the Law, so everyone who has put his trust in Christ is made right with God.***

This is an important statement to understand. Whether you are a Jew, Gentile, Catholic, Protestant, it makes no difference.

Christ is NOT the end of the law as part of God's Word, or as part of Israel's history, or in any other respect.

He IS the end of the law as a means to us achieving righteousness

**We are not required to keep the law in order to be righteous.**

The second related verse is

***2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5%3A21&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28899a)***] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

This is what we would call the Divine Exchange.

Jesus was made sin - even though he had never sinned.

We who had sinned - became as though we had not.

So we have been made righteous with HIS righteousness.

Once we realise this, the devil can no longer make us feel guilty any longer. His main weapon has been taken from him, he has been disarmed by Christ upon the cross.

***15And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.***

But as we can see, it didn't end there. Jesus mad a public spectacle of this disarming, how? by being raised from the dead, victorious over death.

Let me just spend a moment on this word triumphing.

A triumph is not actually the winning of a victory; it is the celebration and demonstration of a victory that has been already won

Jesus, through his death upon the cross, demonstrated to the whole universe His victory over the entire satanic kingdom.

Jesus did not win the victory for Himself, He didn't need to, He won it for us.

It was God's purpose that the victory should be worked out and demonstrated through us. This is why Pauls says

***2 Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.***

Paul's life was far from ideal, but he could say 'thanks be to God'

If we really grasp this message, then we could not help but be shouting 'thanks be to God'.

There are two words in that verse which show us that God always wants us to share Christ's triumph over satans kingdom. They are 'always' and 'everywhere'.

This means that we as Christians should be visibly sharing the triumph at all times and in every place - we are the smell of victory to the world.

***Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”***

Jesus says to his disciples that through the cross He has been given all authority

***Therefore go and make disciples***. There is an implication, an expectation even, that we are to GO and 'exercise' that authority.

Demonstrate my victory by living triumphant lives. Let the world see that you are on the victory side.

*Conclusion*

Let me close by making three simple statements that I hope will cement this great truth of victory.

a. When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted - Jesus defeated Satan on His own behalf. He met Satan, resisted the temptation, and defeated him.

b. On the cross, Jesus defeated Satan on our behalf, Not for himself, but for us. He did not need the victory for himself because he already had it, but he won the victory for us and defeated our enemy. He disarmed him, stripped him, and made an open show of him on our behalf.

c. It is now our responsibility to demonstrate and administer the victory of Jesus.

***2 Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.***

Remember that "always" and "everywhere" Christ has made victory possible for us.

We are in a war, but we have the victory won for us by Christ, let us show that triumph in our daily lives, every day.

Amen.